

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This document describes the **Master of Arts in Creative Writing**. This specification is valid for new entrants from **September 2011**.

The aims of the programme are:

- to give a sound basis for the study and practice of literary composition, and the development of creative and artistic sophistication;
- to provide students with knowledge, understanding, intellectual, and discipline-specific skills;
- to provide a flexible and progressive structure in which students are able to practice the art of literary composition, to acquire advanced familiarity and fluency in using literary techniques for the writing of poetry or fiction, and to acquire understanding and appropriate skills relating to distinctive practice-based research and research specialisms;
- to produce graduates with a range of personal skills relevant to the literary world and the world beyond HE, who are able to engage in lifelong learning and to contribute to the literary, artistic and wider community;
- to be suited both to those wishing to complete their university-level studies with a Master's degree and to those for whom a Master's programme is intended to lead to a higher degree.

The programme is delivered over one year of full-time study (52 weeks) or two years of part-time study (104 weeks). It is characterized by advanced training in the key areas of literary composition, by strong progression and by opportunities for specialisation to professional level or for transfer to higher research degrees (MPhil or PhD).

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This document provides a summary of the main features of the programme(s), and of the outcomes which a student might reasonably be expected to achieve if full advantage is taken of the learning opportunities provided. Further information is contained in the College prospectus, the College Regulations and in various handbooks issued to students upon arrival. Whilst Royal Holloway keeps all its information for prospective applicants and students under review, programmes and the availability of individual courses are necessarily subject to change at any time, and prospective applicants are therefore advised to seek confirmation of any factors which might affect their decision to follow a specific programme. In turn, Royal Holloway will inform applicants and students as soon as is practicable of any substantial changes which might affect their studies.

Learning outcomes

Teaching and learning in the programme are closely informed by the active research and practice of staff. In general terms, the programmes provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the following learning outcomes:

Knowledge and understanding

- the comprehensive understanding and advanced use of literary techniques as a support for creative work;
- the ability to consider the value and worth of literary compositions from the perspective of the writer;
- the ability to consider literary compositions in a professional context;
- the ability to achieve an advanced level of quality in literary composition;

- the development of an individual writing voice;
- the ability to combine technical mastery with personal creative concerns;
- the enhancement of skills in communicating individual creative intentions;
- the ability to demonstrate clarity in compositional thinking;
- the ability to reflect critically on their own practice;
- a critical awareness of current issues in their area of professional practice;
- the original application of the understanding of techniques and knowledge in their own creative practice.

Skills and other attributes

- planning, designing and writing advanced and sophisticated literary compositions;
- employing a variety of literary devices and developing a distinct and viable individual voice as a writer through original composition;
- familiarity with an appropriate body of modern and contemporary literary works;
- insight into the processes and methodologies of professional writers and the writing industry;
- the ability to reflect critically on their own work and articulate its relation to contemporary practice;
- assessing the merits of various techniques of literary composition;
- analyzing and problem-solving in the process of literary composition;
- artistic decision-making;
- critically judging literary works;
- developing sustained literary structures;
- taking responsibility for their own learning and creative work, and developing habits of reflection on that work;
- self-direction and originality in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;*
- In addition, this programme fosters the development of a range of personal attributes that are important in the world of work and that strengthen our graduates' abilities to engage in lifelong learning and contribute to the literary, artistic and wider community. These include: personal motivation; creativity and originality; the ability to work autonomously and with writers and those in allied disciplines e.g. publishers, editors; self-awareness and self-management; empathy and insight; intellectual, artistic and creative integrity; interest in lifelong learning; flexibility and adaptability.*

* transferable skills

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Teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching is mostly by means of workshops; seminars; seminars and work with professional writers, publishers, and agents; one-to-one tutorials; guided independent writing and guided independent study. These help to develop the student as a writer and his/her knowledge, understanding and to acquire and develop practical and discipline-specific skills. As students progress through the programme, they develop a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of these aspects, through their application and interpretation in particular compositional contexts. Full details of the assessments for individual courses can be obtained from the [Department](#).

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Details of the programme structure(s)

Students must take one of the following courses, worth 25% of the Masters programme; the choice of this course will dictate what other courses are available to the student.

EN5118 Fiction Workshop

EN5112 Poetry Workshop

EN5501 The Practice of Life Writing

Students who take EN5118 or EN5112 will also be required to take EN5114 Supplementary Discourses (12.5%) and one of the following courses: EN5115 Editing (12.5%) or EN5116 Reading as a Writer (12.5%).

Students who take EN5501 will also be required to take EN5502 Biography: Cultural Contexts (12.5%) and EN5503 Autobiography: Cultural Contexts (12.5%).

All students are then able to consider and develop the techniques and skills they have acquired in these courses by incorporating them and extending them significantly into their own personal creative concerns in the following courses, which are taught by individual tutorials in term 3 and over the Summer:
EN5113 Writing Project (25%)
EN5117 Dissertation (25%)

Part time programme structure

Part-time students take EN5113 and EN5117 in the second year. The Editing course will be linked to the production of an annual anthology of work from the programme (to be published by Murrays).

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Progression and award requirements

Progression throughout the year/s is monitored through performance in oral presentations, contributions to seminar discussion and coursework. To pass the programme a student must achieve an overall weighted average of at least 50.00%, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. Failure marks between 40-49% can be condoned in courses which do not constitute more than 25% of the final assessment, provided that the overall weighted average is at least 50.00%, but a failure mark (i.e. below 50%) in the dissertation cannot be condoned.

The **Masters** degree with Merit may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 60.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%.

The **Masters** degree with Distinction may be awarded if a student achieves an overall weighted average of 70.00% or above, with no mark in any element which counts towards the final assessment falling below 50%. A Distinction will not normally be awarded if a student re-sits or re-takes any element of the programme. In exceptional circumstances a viva may be held for a student at the request of the Examiners.

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Student support and guidance

- Students will be allocated a Supervisor and an advisor, each acting according to the College Code of Practice for the Academic Welfare of Postgraduate Students. The Director of the MA in Creative Writing, the Director of Graduate Studies and the Head of Department also provide further points of contact for students wishing to discuss academic or personal issues;
- All staff are available and accessible through a dedicated office-hours system;
- The modular structure, teaching methods and assessment procedures (in the last case, with work submitted and marked during the year) should permit the early identification of students with problems and/or in danger of failing the programme. Failure to attend classes, to submit coursework or to attend supervisions counts as a disciplinary offence to be dealt with by normal College procedures. There is no provision for students who fail the degree to be awarded an intermediate qualification, although a certificate of attendance and a transcript of grades awarded will be made available in such cases;
- Student feedback is obtained on a regular basis by informal discussion and by formal questionnaires. Such feedback and the minutes of the Postgraduate Student-Staff Committee provide support for the annual monitoring of the degree;
- Detailed student handbook and course resources;
- Extensive supporting materials and learning resources in the College library, Senate House library and the College computer centre;
- College Careers Service and Departmental Careers Service liaison officer;
- Access to all College and University support services, including Student Counselling Service, Health Centre and the Educational Support Office for students with special needs.

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Admission requirements

Applicants should have or expect to have an undergraduate degree in English (2.1 or higher) or related subject, or an equivalent qualification. Candidates will be expected to produce supporting materials in the form of literary compositions. A conditional or firm offer of a place on the MA in Creative Writing is made on the basis of such material and, whenever possible, an interview. In exceptional circumstances, candidates with a 2.2 may be permitted to enrol on the programme; other non-standard qualifications will be judged on their merits. Mature students are strongly encouraged to apply; again each case is judged on its merits. Candidates who do not have standard qualifications but show an appropriate level in literary composition through work/professional experience may also be admitted; each such application will be assessed on its own merits. Students whose first language is not English may also be asked for a qualification in English Language at an appropriate level. For further details please refer to the [Prospective Students](#) web page. It may also be helpful to contact the [Admissions Office](#) for specific guidance on the entrance requirements for particular programmes.

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Further learning and career opportunities

Some students taking the MA in Creative Writing will want to proceed to practice-based Ph.Ds. These are now available at Royal Holloway (and elsewhere). The experience of the Creative Writing Project, the Dissertation and the options in Supplementary Discourses and Reading as a Writer will be excellent preparation for undertaking a PhD. Some students will be using the PhD for career development purposes as teachers of Creative Writing. Some will already have considerable experience as teachers of creative writing and will be using the MA to enhance their employability. Some will be seeking to develop a career in this area as a consequence of taking the MA. For both groups the workshop experience, the Dissertation and the options in Supplementary Discourses and Reading as a Writer will be particularly valuable. Some students will be seeking careers in various aspects of the publishing and literary industries. The options in Supplementary Discourses and Editing and Publishing will be particularly useful. Other students will be using the MA primarily to develop their writing practice for careers as novelists, short story writers and poets. For more details on further learning and career opportunities please refer to the [Careers Service](#).

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Indicators of quality and standards

Royal Holloway's position as one of the UK's leading research-intensive institutions was confirmed by the results of the most recent Research Assessment Exercise (RAE 2008) conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE). The new scoring system for the RAE 2008 measures research quality in four categories, with the top score of 4* indicating quality that is world-leading and of the highest standards in terms of originality, significance and rigour. 60% of the College's research profile is rated as world-leading or internationally excellent outperforming the national average of 50%. The College is ranked 16th in the UK for research of 4* standard and 18th for 3* and 4* research. All staff in the English Department are highly regarded scholars, writers and critics and the quality of our research was recognised in the most recent Research Assessment Exercise, where ninety percent of our research was found to be of international quality. We also host the national English Subject centre, which drives innovation and improvement in teaching and learning across English studies.

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List of programmes

The programme is taught by staff at Royal Holloway, University of London, and by visiting lecturers and leads to an award of the University of London. The banner code is given in parentheses.

Master of Arts Programme in Creative Writing

MA Creative Writing (1073)

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